

35478 X

MEMORANDUM

NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL

~~TOP SECRET/UMBRA ATTACHMENTS~~INFORMATION
7 December 1971

MEMORANDUM FOR: DR. KISSINGER

FROM: Arnold Nachmanoff

SUBJECT: Cuban Seizure of Panamanian Ship in
International Waters

Late Sunday Cuban naval units seized the Panamanian-flag ship LAYLA EXPRESS in international waters off the eastern tip of Cuba. The freighter was intercepted by a Cuban subchaser and was boarded by Border Guardsmen and a navy staff commander who took the ship into Nipe Bay early Monday morning.

25X1

There is no indication, however, that any other ships have been seized. Two of these vessels, the WILLIAM EXPRESS and the JOHNNY EXPRESS had been shadowed by Cuban patrol boats in early November. All are owned by Teofilo Babun, who has been active in Cuban exile movements since the early years of the Castro regime.

In October exiles from the Miami area mounted a commando raid on a small Cuban village in which four Cubans reportedly were killed. The raid was reportedly carried out from a Panamanian-flag ship. The present seizure, which was obviously approved by Havana and was probably planned in advance, is undoubtedly in reaction to that incident. The Cubans may also suspect the EXPRESS ships of carrying supplies for use by exile raiders. They will undoubtedly search the ship thoroughly.

State is presently checking to see if any of the above-mentioned EXPRESS ships are American-owned. I will keep you informed of any further developments, but this incident again demonstrates the types of problems which uncontrolled exile activity can produce. The Cuban Government is already taking advantage of the incident to try to implicate the CIA in such exile activities (press report at Tab B).

ON-FILE NSC RELEASE INSTRUCTIONS APPLY

Tab A -- Intercepted communications
Tab B -- FBIS 50 dtd 7 Dec 1971

NSA review completed

~~TOP SECRET/UMBRA ATTACHMENTS~~